Productive Enough

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Productive Enough

You've probably heard this before: *"Don't work harder. Work smarter!"*

This life-coach-approved, Tony Robbins-esque advice is great and all, but how do you actually make it happen?

My name is Matthew Manos. I've launched successful companies, written books, advised hundreds of organizations, earned a Master's degree, and shared my story on stages across the globe. But here's a less glamorous thing about me: after struggling for over a decade to manage my stress, in 2018, I developed a dangerous immunological condition that I am now forced to live with and manage, every single day. The diagnosis was a wake up call that literally changed my life; it forced me to rethink the unhealthy relationship to productivity I had developed as a young entrepreneur.

I wrote *Productive Enough* to share the mindful productivity and time management tricks I've developed to help myself get more done while also reducing stress. *Productive Enough* was written for overwhelmed entrepreneurs, freelancers, and leaders with a lot on their plate. This toolkit starts by helping you better understand your relationship to time and work. Next, you'll develop long and short-term strategies to help you get individual tasks done while also creating the conditions for healthier work in the future. Finally, the toolkit concludes with a series of productivity commitments to increase your accountability.

Part of what this toolkit aims to teach is that productivity is a highly personal topic. Your productivity is different from someone else's productivity. The goal, as the title implies, is to be *Productive Enough* for <u>you</u>.

Materials Required:

I recommend that you print out this toolkit so that you can write on it and fill out the worksheets I've included. You'll want a pen or pencil to complete the toolkit.
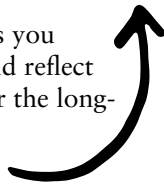
Part 01:
Self Awareness

Contrary to what you might read in other books or blogs, productivity strategies are not a one-size-fits-all kind of thing. Before we can dive into working on your own productivity strategies, it's critical to reflect on your relationship to the work you do, and to your time.

Activity: The Hat Matrix

Entrepreneurs often find themselves wearing a lot of hats. On one day, you're calming down an angry customer while approving an employee's vacation time. On another, you're running marketing and sales while mocking up a business card. Not all of these hats fit perfectly, but as an entrepreneur it is important to understand the many roles and responsibilities that make a business function. Get to know these roles. Understand the frustrations and pain points. Get as good as you can at them. Then, when the time is right, start looking for ways to take some of those hats off.

In this exercise, we'll work together to call out the hats you currently wear, define your relationship to each hat, and reflect upon the ways we can either remove or fasten them for the long-run. To begin, describe your current role, to the right:

Your current title:

Now, explain what that means to a five year old, using the space below.

Part 01:
Self Awareness

Activity: The Hat Matrix

Next, reflect upon your responses, and attempt to categorize your current workload into a minimum of 3 hats, and a maximum of 9.
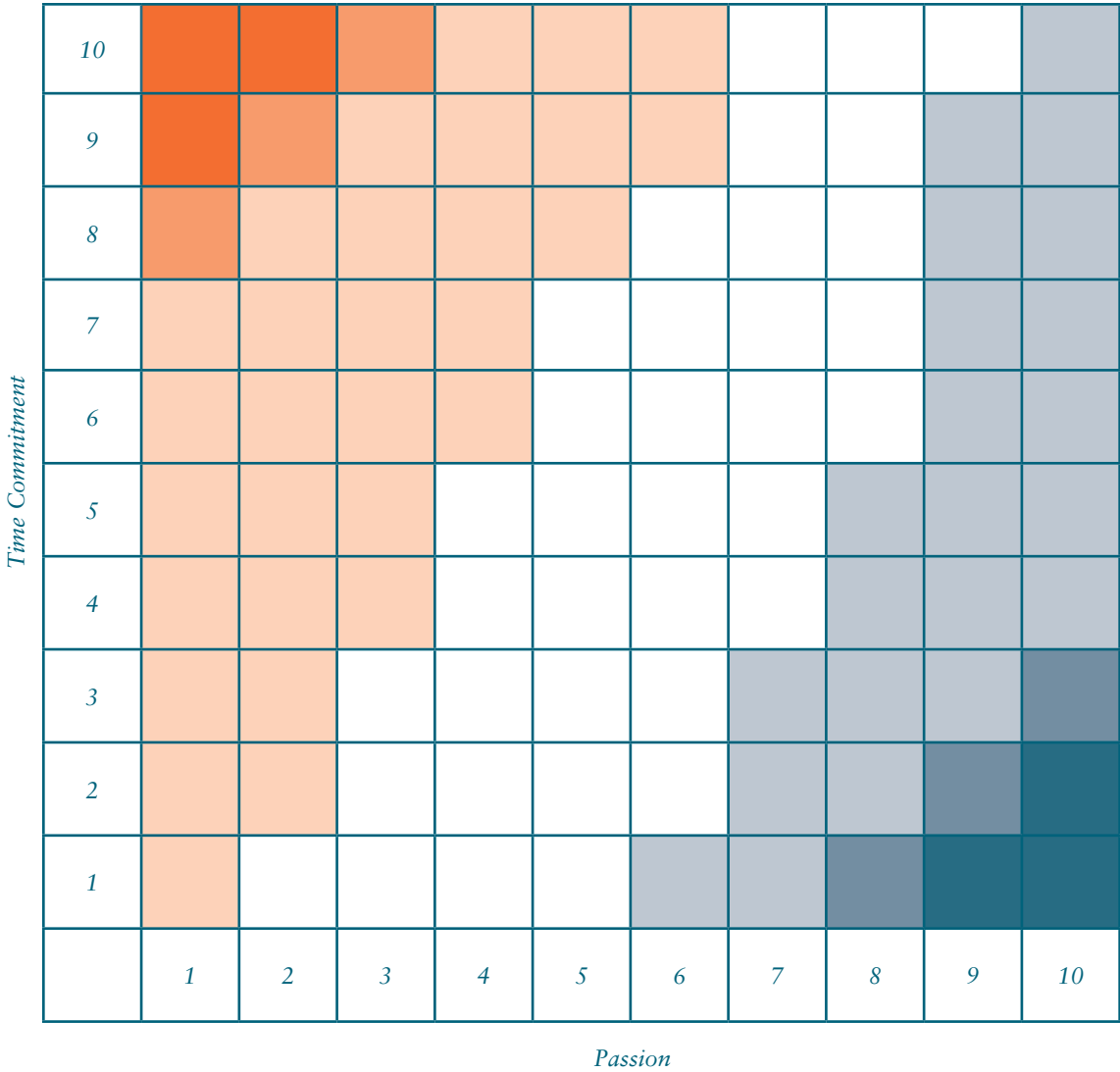
Populate the template to the right. Create a title for each of your current hats. On a scale of 1-10 (with 1 being low, and 10 being high), how passionate are you about each of these hats? Next, how time intensive is each hat? For time commitment, imagine that a "10" is something you spend five or more hours doing each work day, whereas a "1" might be something you spend 30 minute or less on per work day.

Title: (Hat Title)	*Title: (Hat Title)*	*Title: (Hat Title)*
Time Commitment: (1-10)	*Time Commitment: (1-10)*	*Time Commitment: (1-10)*
Passion: (1-10)	*Passion: (1-10)*	*Passion: (1-10)*
Title: (Hat Title)	*Title: (Hat Title)*	*Title: (Hat Title)*
Time Commitment: (1-10)	*Time Commitment: (1-10)*	*Time Commitment: (1-10)*
Passion: (1-10)	*Passion: (1-10)*	*Passion: (1-10)*
Title: (Hat Title)	*Title: (Hat Title)*	*Title: (Hat Title)*
Time Commitment: (1-10)	*Time Commitment: (1-10)*	*Time Commitment: (1-10)*
Passion: (1-10)	*Passion: (1-10)*	*Passion: (1-10)*

Part 01:
Self Awareness
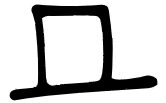
Activity: The Hat Matrix

Next, use the data you just collected in the space on the previous page to populate a hat matrix. Write the title of the hat in the appropriate square. The y-axis represents the time commitment, and the x-axis represents your passion for the hat.

Part 01:
Self Awareness

Activity: The Hat Matrix

Now, it's time to evaluate. This exercise allows you to be more aware of the hats that are taking significant amounts of time, and the extent to which they are contributing to, or taking away from, what you are most passionate about.

Let's start our reflection by taking a closer look at any of the hats that reside in the top left of your matrix (AKA the "red zone"). If you've identified some hats in the red zone, reflect on the following:

- What can you do to improve upon the pain points you face when wearing this hat?
- Is there a software or service out there that can help you with this hat?
- Can this hat be automated or delegated?

It's important to acknowledge it isn't always practical to take a hat off too fast. Removing any of your hats right now entirely may even seem impossible, either logistically, financially, or emotionally. Instead, take incremental steps to conserve your time, and focus your energy on what is most important to you and your business.

Next, it is important to acknowledge the hats that are landing in the "blue zones," as these are contributing positively to what you are most passionate about while impacting your time in a comfortable manner. If you've identified some hats in the blue zones, reflect on the following:

- How can you make the time to further refine your skills and grow in this area?
- How can you be more open in communicating with your team, clients, and/or colleagues about your passion for this hat?

Finally, you'll notice a colorless zone (let's call this the "gray area"). Hats that land in the gray area are likely not composed of tasks you hate, or tasks you love. This is neutral territory. While it is great to think that we can make every aspect of our work wonderful, it is called "work" for a reason. Some tasks just have to be accepted and tolerated.

Part 01:
Self Awareness
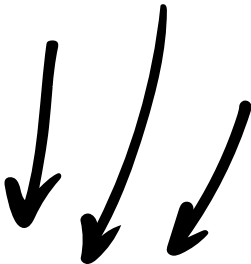
Activity: The Best Day

When planning your schedule, it's important to understand how your productivity tends to change throughout the week. Everyone's different; some days you might just feel "off". But more often than not, your productivity can present itself as a pattern. The purpose of this activity is to track your feelings toward work throughout the week. Use the template below each day for 7 days to complete a brief reflection on your productivity, and the hats that you wore on each day (for consistency's sake, reference the same ones you created in the previous activity, The Hat Matrix). If you did not work on any given day, please leave the space blank.*

Remember, boundaries are critical. We'll explore boundaries more together in Part 03.

- *Hats:* The various roles you took on throughout the day.
- *Productivity*: On a scale of 1-10, how productive you felt.
- *Notes:* Highlights, good or bad, that defined the day.

As some weeks can bring with them unique challenges, we recommend doing this for 3-5 weeks in a row to really get to know your productivity patterns. Once you've completed your self study, consider the following:

- On what days am I most productive?
- On what days am I least productive?
- On what days do I wear the most hats?
- On what days do I wear the least hats?
- *Bonus:* What kinds of hats do I thrive wearing in the earlier part of my week?
- *Bonus:* What kinds of hats do I thrive wearing in the later part of my week?

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Hats							
Productivity (1-10)							
Notes							

Part 01:
Self Awareness

Activity: The Best Hour

Now that you've gotten a feel for the days of the week that you are typically most productive, it's time to get a bit more granular.

We often talk about being "a morning person," or "a night owl." This exercise allows you to track and document your productivity throughout the day. At the end of each hour, budget a few minutes to reflect, using the template to the right.

If you did not work on any given hour, please leave the space blank.

- *Hats:* The various roles you took on that hour.
- *Productivity:* On a scale of 1-10, how productive you felt.

As some days can bring with them unique challenges, we recommend doing this 3-5 days in a row to really get to know your productivity patterns. Once you've completed your self study, consider the following:

- What time of day am I most productive?
- What time of day am I least productive?
- *Bonus:* What kinds of hats do I thrive wearing in the earlier part of my day?
- *Bonus:* What kinds of hats do I thrive wearing in the later part of my day?

	Hats	*Productivity*
12:00am		
1:00am		
2:00am		
3:00am		
4:00am		
5:00am		
6:00am		
7:00am		
8:00am		
9:00am		
10:00am		
11:00am		
12:00pm		
1:00pm		
2:00pm		
3:00pm		
4:00pm		
5:00pm		
6:00pm		
7:00pm		
8:00pm		
9:00pm		
10:00pm		
11:00pm		

Part 02: Strategies

Now that you've gained more self-awareness around your relationship to work and time, it's time to try out a few strategies that can help you become more productive.

Activity: The Point and the Periphery

I'm not afraid to admit that I once spent 30 minutes writing a paper, and 45 formatting it. Without acknowledging what the point of a project is, you can easily get caught up in the nice-to-haves, or the periphery. Use the process below to differentiate these two things:

To begin, pick a task that is currently on your plate.

Describe the nature of the task at-hand, using the space below:

Next, breakdown each step required to make this deliverable a reality. Do this in a list format. Include a minimum of three steps, and a maximum of 7:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

Next, summarize the task's deliverable, in just 1-3 words:

7.

Part 02:
Strategies

Activity: The Point and the Periphery

Next, referencing the list on the previous page, populate the
template below:

If I can only complete one step, it would be...	
To make the project a success, I should complete this step...	
Only if there is time, I should tackle this step...	

Now, as you go on to plan your time to complete the steps for the
task at-hand, go about them in the order listed in the template
above. In the next section, we'll introduce you to a tool called
Time Comparables.

Part 02:
Strategies

Tool: Time Comparables

Whenever you take on a task unlike anything you've done before, time yourself. The next time you take on that task, time yourself again. By the third time, you'll have the data you need to know how long a task like that will take you. This will better prepare you for the next time that task comes up.

The Time Comparables tool is a simple template to help you keep logs like this so that you have a reference point that can build your confidence in making time estimates in the future.

Once you know the task at hand, use the data you've collected in the worksheet above to compare it to similar tasks, and estimate the appropriate amount of time to set aside. Next, schedule that time for yourself. This is called timeboxing.

Based on the time estimates example logged to the right, the next time I have a task that consists of proposal writing, I will budget at least 45 minutes on my calendar to get it done.

Hats	Attempt 01	Attempt 02	Attempt 03	Average Time
Example: Proposal Writing	*30 minutes*	*60 minutes*	*45 minutes*	*45 minutes*

Part 02:
Strategies

Activity: Peculiar Alternations

Here we go again. Too much to do, with too little time. The common approach is to eliminate any and all distractions to allow for total focus. But what if I were to tell you this could be having the inverse effect on your productivity?

It feels great to get into a rhythm with work. You might have felt this before. It's true, getting into a rhythm or "flow" of work can increase your productivity, but only for so long. When we start working, things can be messy and distractions can present themselves, but after some time goes on, we can find ourselves getting into a bit of a groove. While you might generate some good ideas at the start, after a while, fatigue can grow and the quality of ideas can worsen.

The key to avoiding a loss of quality in our ideas is to break the flow every once in a while. The Pomodoro method, a popular technique in which you work off-and-on in short (~25 minute long) increments, allows you to break the rhythm. But it also reminds you of how nice it is to not be working.

Instead, inject some peculiarity. Instead of working for a few minutes, resting for a few minutes, etc., try working on two simultaneous tasks in 20 minute increments.

- Task 01 = your core project
- Task 02 = your peculiar project

For example, let's say you're trying to write an essay for class about the artist Frida Kahlo. Every 20 minutes, work on that essay. Every other 20 minutes, why not attempt to recreate one of her paintings?

- First 20 minutes = essay writing
- Second 20 minutes = painting
- Third 20 minutes = essay writing
- Fourth 20 minutes = painting
- Fifth 20 minutes = break*

After your fourth sprint, take a 20 minute break.

By taking on simultaneous tasks, you can challenge your rhythm. In doing so, scientists have found that you are actually able to force your old ideas to compete, therefore leading to new ones. This intentional break to refocus can keep you fresh when tackling the primary challenge at-hand. This works best for tasks that are estimated to take at least two hours to complete.

To begin, pick a task that is currently on your plate.

Describe the nature of the task at-hand, using the space below:

Part 02:
Strategies

Activity: Peculiar Alternations

Next, based on what you've written on the previous page, which of the following categories best describe the core task? If you can't find something that exactly fits, pick the one that's the closest.

Writing	*For example: writing a blog post, social media post, or memo.*
Editing	*For example: editing a blog post, resume, or book.*
Reading/Studying	*For example: reading a long memo, book, or email.*
Correspondence	*For example: crafting a response to an email or making calls.*
Management	*For example: checking in with team members and setting schedules.*
Logistics	*For example: shipping products, scheduling things, or researching vendors.*
Ideation/Reflection	*For example: brainstorming a solution to a problem.*
Planning	*For example: writing a strategic plan or developing a plan for growth.*
Making/Production	*For example: designing a website, editing a video, or creating visual content.*
Analysis	*For example: synthesizing an interview or survey, or building a spreadsheet.*

Part 02:
Strategies

Activity: Peculiar Alternations

Every 20 minutes, alternate between the core task that you've identified, and one of the following suggested "peculiar pairings."

While it may seem like this method is doubling the time it takes to complete your core task, it is actually proven to enhance the productivity of each minute worked. This is because it makes the time you do put toward the core task more precious. In addition, the peculiar task forces your mind to reflect upon the task at-hand in more creative ways.

Core Task:	*Draw a visual representation of your writing; read a book by someone influential in the space you are writing about.*
Editing	*Draw a visual representation of what you are editing.*
Reading/Studying	*Write a short story about one aspect of your supply chain, product, service, or chain of command… if it existed on Mars.*
Correspondence	*Take the first word of your correspondence, and draw it in a fun and visual way; Imagine the correspondence from the last hour/day/week/month was a book cover. What would it look like?*
Management	*Write a screenplay for a sitcom about your company.*
Logistics	*Write a short story about one aspect of your supply chain, product, service, or chain of command… if it existed on Mars.*
Ideation/Reflection	*Write a haiku that represents the ideas or reflections.*
Planning	*Draw a visual representation of what you are planning.*
Making/Production	*Draw a flowchart that breaks down every step of your process. Make it unreasonably detailed/ornate.*
Analysis	*Write a series of poems or short stories that represent the key theme(s) of your analysis.*

Part 02:
Strategies

Activity: Long-term thinking

Time management is not just about immediate tasks, it's also about the long-term. By identifying your ideal workload and focus, you can build toward a day-to-day schedule that is more fulfilling. The purpose of this exercise is to help you learn to set goals like a strategist. Far too often, we set goals that go unrealized. Has this happened to you? (Probably.) It's a situation many of us have found ourselves in before. It's defeating. Here's a simple method that strategists use with clients to set goals and stick to them.

Step 01: What is it that you *don't* want to do?

I'm going to let you in on a little secret: Strategy is about determining what you don't want to do so that you can ultimately make a decision about what you do want to do. In the space provided below, write down three things you don't want to do in the next six months:

For example, what I don't want is…
- To feel unfulfilled.
- To feel complacent.
- To be too busy.

1.

2.

3.

Step 02: What is it that you *do* want to do?

Now that you've written down three things you don't want to do, it's time to think about what you do want to do in the next six months.

In the space provided below, write down the opposite of those three things you don't want to do.

For example, what I do want is…
- ~~To feel unfulfilled.~~ To make more art.
- ~~To feel complacent.~~ To try new things.
- ~~To be too busy.~~ To make time to rest.

1.

2.

3.

Part 02:
Strategies

Activity: Long-term thinking

Step 03: Milestones and Activities

Every strategic plan includes key milestones. These are big moments of accomplishment. In the space below, re-frame those three things from Step 02 as milestones.

Write down one milestone for each of the things you want to do more of in the next six months, for a total of three.

For example, what I don't want is…
- ~~To feel unfulfilled.~~ To make more art. » Draw something every day for 100 days.
- ~~To feel complacent.~~ To try new things. » Learn how to play the piano.
- ~~To be too busy.~~ To make time to rest. » Travel to Hawaii.
- To be too busy.

Milestone 01:

Milestone 02:

Milestone 03:

Part 02:
Strategies

Activity: Long-term thinking

A milestone alone is not enough information to allow you to make your action plan. You also need to determine the key activities, or actions, you'll have to take on to realize those goals.

For each of the milestones you wrote down on the previous page, write down three activities.

For example…
- *Draw something every day for 100 days.*
  - *Buy a new notebook.*
  - *Block off time to draw.*
  - *Scan each drawing.*
- *Learn how to play the piano.*
  - *Research lessons.*
  - *Sign up for lessons.*
  - *Attend each class session.*
- *Travel to Hawaii.*
  - *Save money.*
  - *Plan the trip and request time off.*
  - *Buy the tickets.*

Milestone 01:

Activity 01.

Activity 02.

Activity 03.

Milestone 02:

Activity 01.

Activity 02.

Activity 03.

Milestone 03:

1.

2.

3.

Part 02:
Strategies

Activity: Long-term thinking

Step 05: Map it out

Now that you've created your key milestones and key activities, create a timeline that visualizes it all happening in the next six months. Using the template on the next page, create a timeline with the key milestones and key activities that you finalized in Step 04.

For example...

Month 01	Month 02	Month 03	Month 04	Month 05	Month 05
Milestones	*Milestones*	*Milestones*	*Milestones*	*Milestones*	*Milestones*
			Draw something every day for 100 days.		*Learn how to play the piano*
Activities	*Activities*	*Activities*	*Activities*	*Activities*	*Activities*
Buy a new notebook. Block off time to draw. Save money.	*Research lessons. Sign up for lessons. Save money.*	*Save money. Plan the trip and request time off. Buy the tickets.*	*Scan each drawing.*	*Attend each class session.*	

Part 02:
Strategies

Activity: Long-term thinking

Step 05: Map it out

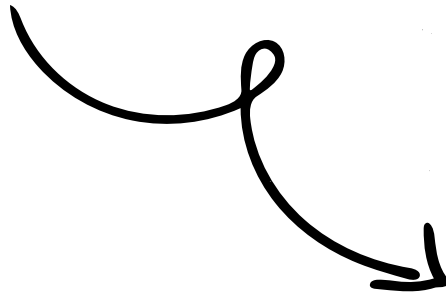| Month 01	Month 02	Month 03	Month 04	Month 05	Month 05
Milestones	Milestones	Milestones	Milestones	Milestones	Milestones
Activities	Activities	Activities	Activities	Activities	Activities

Part 03: Commitments

It's hard to see any real change in our productivity if we don't make the effort to commit to the things that will move us in the right direction.

Activity: Commitments to Action

We will never take control of our time if we do not learn to set boundaries, and stick to them. The goal is to design your work/life in a way in which each day requires a similar amount of energy and effort to the previous. Conserve your energy for the next day by setting rules for yourself. For example, when do you stop replying to emails? When do you unplug from technology? Set boundaries, and stick to them.

The template on the next page serves as a starting point for making commitments to action. Populate this, and add your own information!

Part 03: Commitments

Activity: Commitments to Action

My Commitment

For prompts 1-7, refer to your work in Part 01.

For prompts 5-7, select the one hat that best describes the tasks you are best at, at that time of day. It is okay if one hat is best at two different times!

1. My most productive day of the week is

2. My least productive day of the week is

5. In the morning, I am best at

3. My most productive time of day is

6. In the afternoon, I am best at

4. My least productive time of day is

7. In the evening, I am best at

For prompts 8-9, reflect on the boundaries you'd like to set.

8. Unless it is an absolute emergency, I will not work or reply to email on this/these day(s) of the week (circle one):
MONDAY · TUESDAY · WEDNESDAY · THURSDAY · FRIDAY · SATURDAY · SUNDAY

9. On days that I am not working, I will check my email (circle one):
0 TIMES/DAY · 1 TIME/DAY · 2 TIMES/DAY · 3 TIMES/DAY · 4 TIMES/DAY · 5 TIMES/DAY · CONSTANTLY

In the space to the right, set other commitments that you'd like to realize.

I, *Your name here* , am making a promise to myself to stick to these commitments to the best of my ability.

Signature

Date

Productive Enough

Final Thoughts

Unfortunately, time management is not a one-and-done exercise. Take the lessons and commitments you've learned through this toolkit forward, but also don't be afraid to step back, assess, and adjust! Thanks for reading, and good luck with your productive enough journey.

— Matthew

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